

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE PRIORITY
INFO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 211400

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PORG, UNGA, YO, RQ

SUBJECT:PUERTO RICO IN THE COMMITTEE OF 24

REF: A) STATE 188247; B) STATE 203994; C) BELGRADE 5998

1. AS THE EMBASSY IS AWARE, THE COMMITTEE OF 24 IS
EXPECTED TO TAKE UP PUERTO RICO ON AUGUST 28, AND VOTING
ON PROCEDURAL MOTION TO POSTPONE DEBATE MAY BE VERY
CLOSE.

2. IN SEPTEL, AMBASSADOR BELOVSKI TOLD DAS LUERS THAT
YUGOSLAVIA IS NOT LIKELY TO VOTE TO POSTPONE DEBATE ON
PUERTO RICO IN THE COMMITTEE BUT WOULD PROBABLY ABSTAIN
AS IT HAS THE PAST TWO YEARS. UNDER STRONG URGING,
BELOVSKI INDICATED THAT HE WOULD PRESENT OUR CASE TO
BELGRADE.

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3. WE WOULD LIKE THE CHARGE TO SEE THE FOREIGN MINISTER
OR ANOTHER APPROPRIATE OFFICIAL AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO
STRESS THAT THIS ISSUE IS OF CONCERN TO THE HIGHEST
LEVELS OF OUR GOVERNMENT.

4. TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO, IN 1953, THE UNGA FORMALLY

DETERMINED THAT THE PEOPLE OF PUERTO RICO HAD EXERCISED THEIR RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION. THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT HAS CONSISTENTLY SUPPORTED THAT RIGHT SINCE THEN, AND THE LATEST EVIDENCE OF THIS IS PRESIDENT CARTER'S PROCLAMATION OF JULY 25. WE KNOW THAT YUGOSLAVIA, AS A FEDERATION OF SEVERAL NATIONALITIES, CAN APPRECIATE THE COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP THAT HAS EXISTED BETWEEN PUERTO RICO AND THE MAINLAND UNITED STATES SINCE 1898. WE HAVE MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE QUESTION OF ANY ADJUSTMENT IN PUERTO RICO'S PRESENT STATUS IS FOR THE PEOPLE OF PUERTO RICO TO DECIDE -- JUST AS THEY FREELY CHOSE THEIR PRESENT STATUS IN 1952 -- AND THAT WHATEVER THEIR CHOICE, THE PRESIDENT WILL SUPPORT IT. WE SEE NO REASON WHY THE COMMITTEE OF 24 SHOULD CONSIDER A SUBSTANTIVE RESOLUTION ON THIS SUBJECT WHICH IS AIMED SIMPLY AT CAUSING DIFFICULTIES FOR THE UNITED STATES, AND AT EMBARRASSING PUERTO RICO BY LABELLING IT A COLONY. WE STRONGLY HOPE THAT YUGOSLAVIA WILL VOTE IN FAVOR OF A PROCEDURAL RESOLUTION TO POSTPONE DEBATE, RATHER THAN ABSTAINING AS IT DID LAST YEAR.

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